(d) Matter is under consideration of the Ministry of Civil Aviation as it requires amendment to the existing rules in this regard.

Opening of Pravasi Centres in Embassies

1059. SHRIMATI S.G INDIRA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to ease the problems of Non-Resident Indians;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government are considering to open Pravasi Centres in embassies; and

(d) if so, the details and the objectives thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRIVAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has been set up especially to look after the interests of Non-Resident Indians and PIOs. Among other initiatives, voting rights to Indian citizens who are away from their place of residence on account of employment, education or otherwise has been approved by the Government. Also the Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana has been revamped to provide additional benefits to Indian citizens seeking employment abroad. Other initiatives such as the Diaspora Knowledge Network (DKN) will also help overseas Indians to be more closely involved with India's development.

(c) and (d) A proposal to establish Overseas Centres is under examination in consultation with Ministries of External Affairs and Finance. The functions of the proposed centres would be location-specific. Broadly they will coordinate with local overseas Indians and their Associations and arrange value added services like legal assistance, health clinics, family counseling, and investment guidance.

Funding to local bodies

1060. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to give the funds directly to local bodies in the States;

(b) if so, the guidelines worked out so far in this regard;